

Valentin Spirik
117/6

Additional note:

This film analysis was written as a graduation thesis at the London International Film School (L.I.F.S.) in 1994 (since then the school has been renamed to London Film School: www.lifs.org.uk).

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"Stand By Me" (c) 1986 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

"Different Seasons" (c) 1982 Stephen King

analysis of:

Stand By Me

a film directed by Rob Reiner (USA, 1986)

March / 1994
Vienna, Austria

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I. Analysis in 24 Segments:

“Stand By Me” is analysed by using a breakdown of the story into 24 chronological segments. The discussion of each segment is structured as follows:

NUMBER OF SEGMENT. EXT./INT. LOCATION. DAY/NIGHT

The function of the segment in the story is summarised.

A short description of the action in that segment follows.

(The following aspects are used only if they are relevant to a segment. Sometimes the order might be different from the one underneath:)

Characterisations:

A **CHARACTER** is named and his characterisation in that segment is discussed.

Music used in that segment is discussed.

Relationships:

The relationship between **ONE CHARACTER/ANOTHER CHARACTER** in that segment is discussed.

Themes:

A **theme** raised in that segment is discussed.

Structure:

By discussing an **element of the story** and its use within the context of the whole film, the structure of the film is discussed.

Music used in that segment may also be discussed at that place.

Objects:

An **object** used in that segment is discussed.

Locations:

A **location** used in that segment is discussed.

Even though the analysis is done in a chronological order, the one or the other point might be discussed out of its actual place in the story at a sooner or later point. The reason being that the complexity of an aspect may be easier to describe and to understand in another or similar context.

Stand By Me

1. EXT. ROAD NEAR WOODS. DAY
INT. CAR. DAY

beginning of the framing device/introduction of the main themes

A man, GORDON LACHANCE, sits in his car and reads in the paper about the killing of CHRIS CHAMBERS. He starts to narrate a story:

Characterisation:

GORDON: he is introduced as someone **who tells a story**, at the end of the film he turns out to be a **writer**.

Music: an **instrumental version** of the song "Stand by me" is used throughout the scene. At the end of the film the actual song is played.

Themes:

Motif like at the end: **two boys** (here: passing by on bikes) gives the idea of two friends: this is also a story about **GORDON'S and CHRIS' friendship**.

This is a story about **death** which happened a long time ago ("I was twelve going on thirteen the first time I saw a dead human being" (V.O. GORDON)).

The **first** of three **deaths** (GORDON'S friend CHRIS) is GORDON'S motivation to tell the story (and to write it down).

Location:

The **landscape** around the place where the car stands prepares visually for the exterior locations in which the story takes place, since it looks like them.

2. INT. SHOP. DAY
EXT. STREET. DAY
EXT. NEAR TREE HOUSE. DAY

introduction of one of the main characters (GORDON), the time (the 50's), and the main characters' hometown (Castle Rock)

GORDON, about twelve years old, buys a magazine and walks through a small town, Castle Rock, towards a tree house. These are the 50's and there is 50's music coming from a radio.

Characterisation:

GORDON'S V.O. narration turns into a story told in pictures with its sounds, with music and the V.O. coming back at certain places. What GORDON tells, (later hears from someone else or what he (day)dreams) is **told in pictures**: this way GORDON is characterised as someone with a powerful imagination, which prepares for what he turns out to be: a **writer**.

GORDON buys a magazine which is called "True Police Cases". He is characterised as being interested in **stories**.

Themes:

Castle Rock: "...to me it was the whole world", says GORDON in V.O. about his hometown. When the boys come back home GORDON says in the V.O.: "...somehow the town seemed different, smaller". This remark and the one above together describe a development that GORDON and his friends go through during their journey.

The **time** in which the story takes place is set up (apart from the V.O. saying that this is the year 1959) through the music from the radio and the details in the art design (the magazine, the cash machine, the cars etc.).

Objects:

The **radio** (and the radio announcer):

The **music** used in the film often like here comes from the radio.

The radio is the medium from which the boys **know about the missing boy**.

The **radio announcer** is even a character in the story GORDON tells to his friends.

The radio makes a **sound connection** between some scenes in the film:

Here the radio announcer and the **first song** used connect the introduction of GORDON walking through Castle Rock and towards the tree house with the introduction of his friends. When VERN tells the others what he heard while being under the porch, GORDON turns off the radio that was just playing a **second song**. That song like the first one is used to help create the mood of the time and the scene.

3. INT. TREE HOUSE. DAY

EXT. UNDER PORCH, IN FRONT OF VERN'S HOUSE. DAY

-VERN'S NARRATION-

INT. TREE HOUSE. DAY

introduction of the other main characters (CHRIS, TEDDY, VERN)/the boys are going to go to find the dead body of a kid their age/CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (1)

CHRIS CHAMBERS, TEDDY DUCHAMP and GORDON are in their tree house. VERN TESSIO, a boy of about the same age as CHRIS, TEDDY and GORDON, arrives with news for his friends: incidentally he listened to a conversation between his elder brother and a friend: by accident the big boys had found the dead body of a 12 year old boy, RAY BROWER, who's been missing for some days. CHRIS, TEDDY, VERN and GORDON decide to go to find the body in order to become local heroes. GORDON secretly isn't as enthusiastic as his friends about their plan.

Characterisations:

CHRIS: he is “the leader of our gang and my best friend” (V.O. GORDON), out of his family background CHRIS is **expected to turn out bad**.

TEDDY: he is “the craziest guy we hung around with” (V.O. GORDON). TEDDY has been **abused by his father**: his father held his ear onto a stove and nearly burned it off.

VERN: he is the one the others make jokes about, he is the fat kid, he loses, forgets or drops things (the pennies, the secret knock, the comb on the bridge, the potato over the fire), he hesitates when his friends ask him to go to find the body: he is **anxious**.

GORDON: he is the smart kid. He is the one who very quickly and spontaneously completes the plan how to lie to their parents in order to be able to leave to find the body. GORDON isn't really enthusiastic about going to find the body. There is no real explanation given to this, but he narrates in V.O. in the following scene: “In April my older brother Dennis had been killed in a Jeep accident... .” That way the idea is given, that somehow **his brother's death** has to do with him feeling uneasy about going to find the body.

CHARLIE and **BILLY** from the **big boys'** gang were driving a stolen car, when they found the body. The fact that the car was stolen, characterises what the big boys stand for: they are a **threat to other people** (later on they play “mailbox-baseball” and have a car race on the street).

There is a certain resemblance between the **characters of the four boys** and the **Eysenck's type theory** that is used in psychology in order to describe four dimensions (types) of human beings:

melancholic dimension: moody, reserved, quiet (...): GORDON

sanguine dimension: outgoing, lively, leadership (...): CHRIS

choleric dimension: touchy, aggressive, changeable (...): TEDDY

phlegmatic dimension: passive, careful, calm (...): VERN

In Eysenck's theory the melancholic and the phlegmatic dimensions are defined as **introverted** (GORDON and VERN), the sanguine and the choleric dimensions are defined as **extroverted** (CHRIS and TEDDY).

Relationships:

CHRIS/TEDDY: In that context it is interesting that CHRIS and TEDDY, who keep on playing cards against each other after GORDON is out of the game, have an argument later on (after CHRIS pulls TEDDY off the tracks): they are both **extroverted** and a conflict is likely to occur between them. At the end, when the boys return back home, TEDDY says: “Hey, Chris... . No hard feelings, OK.?”.

GORDON/VERN: The contrary applies to GORDON and VERN. They don't have any real argument and hardly have contact: they are both **introverted**. (The only scene they really have together is the scene on the bridge.) There is also no V.O. introduction for VERN like there is one for CHRIS and TEDDY -again there is no direct relationship between GORDON and VERN-.

As described later **GORDON/CHRIS** and **TEDDY/VERN** form pairs. This also can be explained through the relationships between **CHRIS/TEDDY** and **GORDON/VERN** as just described.

Since GORDON is CHRIS' best friend, CHRIS being the leader of the group, and since there is that conflict-like relationship between CHRIS and TEDDY and not much contact between GORDON and VERN, there is following **group hierarchy**: CHRIS (1), GORDON (2), TEDDY (3) and VERN (4). Through that hierarchy also the pairs CHRIS/VERN and GORDON/TEDDY are unlikely, which is reflected by the fact that there are no particular scenes for those pairs CHRIS/VERN and GORDON/TEDDY.)

CHRIS/GORDON: They laugh together about TEDDY and have a secret handshake.
CHRIS, GORDON, TEDDY/VERN: VERN is the one the others make jokes about.

Themes:

The **second** of three **deaths** (RAY BROWER) is GORDON'S trigger mechanism to cry over his brother's death as well as about the difficult relationship with his **FATHER**.

Themes/Characterisations:

Making jokes about one another / **insulting one another**: later GORDON says in the V.O. "Finding new and preferably disgusting ways to degrade a friend's mother was always held in high regard". The same principle applies to every kind of insulting behaviour within this group of four:

CHRIS: "How do you know a Frenchman has been in your backyard?"

TEDDY: "Hey I'm French, OK!"

CHRIS: "Your garbage cans are empty and your dog is pregnant."

TEDDY: "Didn't I just say I was French?"

The function of this insulting behaviour is, that the boys can say whatever they want to each other, without getting in trouble or being punished for it. (They are allowed, even have to be mean and dirty.) They are friends, and this is their way of showing it. (For a boy who has to develop his male role model it might be easier at a certain age to say to a friend "You're a real son-of-a-bitch" than to say "I really like you.")

A personal note: to me this behaviour looks absolutely convincing. When I was in school we went to a one-week skiing class and I remember friends of mine saying and doing very similar things to each other at that occasion. Apart from finding insulting ways to degrade the other or a member of his family, they did things like cutting off someone's hair while he was asleep, putting toothpaste in the other's shoes, leaving someone's gloves in the snow overnight on the balcony etc. . . . Kids in the USA in the 50's seem to have done very similar things as kids in Austria in the 80's. . . .

Smoking a cigarette: CHRIS and TEDDY smoke a cigarette at an age where they aren't supposed to smoke. It characterises them as feeling a little grown-up and independent.

The **card game**: it is a game that also adults would play, it isn't a "childish" game, it has a function like the cigarettes, it characterises them as feeling older, more grown-up.

The **secret handshake**: after GORDON reveals his plan on how to lie to their parents, he and CHRIS do a secret handshake (they also have a special swear later on). CHRIS and TEDDY do that secret handshake after having had an argument. At the end of their journey CHRIS and GORDON do that secret handshake before saying good-bye.

The **secret knock** describes the tree house as being a private place for the boys.

Location/Themes:

The **tree house**: a tree house is always a place where kids can be on their own, where they can **do what they want to do**: for GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN it is the place where they meet, talk, read magazines, play cards, smoke cigarettes and **insult one another**.

4. EXT. GORDON'S HOUSE. DAY

INT. GORDON'S HOUSE, DENNIS' ROOM. DAY

INT. GORDON'S HOUSE, DENNIS' ROOM. DAY-DAYDREAM 1-

INT. GORDON'S HOUSE, DENNIS' ROOM/CORRIDOR

GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (1) / GORDON daydreams (1)

GORDON, watching his parents working in the garden from the house, asks where his canteen is. His parents are still upset about the death of their other son DENNIS who recently died in a Jeep accident. GORDON goes to get his canteen from DENNIS' room. He daydreams/remembers his brother giving to him his Yankee cap. GORDON'S FATHER comes. He says to GORDON: "Why can't you have friends like Dennis?"

Characterisations:

GORDON daydreams. Someone who daydreams thinks in a very intense way about something important to him. As mentioned before GORDON'S daydreams are **told in pictures** and are used to show his imagination.

Music: the theme used when GORDON enters DENNIS' room is also used later in GORDON'S second daydream and in a much more elaborated way when the boys find the body. The moment GORDON'S daydream starts, the music changes and gives a different mood that underlines GORDON'S and DENNIS' relationship.

Relationships:

GORDON/DENNIS and **GORDON/GORDON'S FATHER**: In the daydream DENNIS' room has got a warm light, the complete contrary to the shot of GORDON awakening from his daydream when his FATHER comes in. That way GORDON'S relationship to his brother is perceived as warm and friendly, the one to his father as cold and hostile. DENNIS gives GORDON a present, his FATHER just makes him feel uneasy.

"Why can't you have friends like Dennis?" (GORDON'S FATHER) means
"Why can't you be like him?" or even "Why can't you be him?"

Theme:

The **third** of three **deaths** (GORDON'S brother DENNIS) is GORDON'S (subconscious) motivation to go to find the body of the dead kid. GORDON has to undergo the journey in order to *realise* why he made that journey in the first place.

Commentary:

I think that this topic of realisation is very close to one of the major themes of a **horror story**/film and it also appears in a toned down way in "Stand By Me", represented through a writer who has to write because he has to remember (=realise):

This motif (told in different variations) is that someone, (very often alone, away from a safe place and those people he/she loves) is confronted with something threatening that puts him/her into great danger, but which always, in fact is the *sudden (and lonely) realisation of something carried with himself/herself for a long time* (e.g. the terrible truth about something that happened in the past). It is also close to the simple, but powerful realisation of *being mortal*. (This might even simply be this realisation carried with oneself.)

(see also page 21: under Theme):

The title of the film and the song "Stand by me" including its lyrics show exactly that. As an example here the first lines of the song:

Stand by me

(=Don't leave me alone)

When the night has come
And the land is dark
And the moon is the only light we'll see
No I won't be afraid, oh I won't be afraid
Just as long as you stand, stand by me

(=When I'm feeling down)
(=In my lonely hour)
(=And I just see a little hope)
(=Yes I will feel safe)
(=Just as long as you don't leave me alone)

(B. E. King/J. Leiber/M. Stoller)

The topic of *realisation* isn't just a main theme used in horror stories, but in a modified way it also appears in **road movies**: not what might be at the end of the journey is the most important thing, but the journey itself as *the process of realisation*. In a **horror film** the realisation comes **suddenly** and therefore it is threatening. In a **road movie** there is **time** to come to a realisation. I think "Stand By Me" is almost somewhere in-between a toned down horror film and a road movie: GORDON *suddenly realises* at the end, after having had *time to make himself ready* for that.

In "Stand By Me" GORDON isn't left alone when he realises why he had to do the journey in the first place. And since his realisation isn't personified as a monster, but as a dead kid which can't do him any harm, "Stand By Me" isn't what would be seen as a horror film, but I think it has got similar elements.

Objects:

The **canteen**: no explanation is given, why GORDON'S canteen is in DENNIS' room. Since GORDON'S FATHER knows that it is in there, it becomes obvious, that he didn't find worth it to tell GORDON about it before. (Since GORDON says in the V.O. that his brother died four months ago, the canteen could have been laying there at least for that time.) The impression is given, that the father actually would like to see the canteen remaining in DENNIS' room. This illustrates GORDON'S relationship to his FATHER.

The canteen is also used to give GORDON a reason for going into his brother's room.

The **Yankee cap**: in a following scene ACE takes away GORDON'S Yankee cap. The cap is the object which GORDON identifies with his brother. It gives CHRIS the opportunity to show his friendship to GORDON and is another motivation for GORDON to point the gun at ACE when ACE attacks CHRIS at the end.
(see also page 12: under Objects/Characterisations:)

5. EXT. STREET. DAY
EXT. BACKYARD. DAY
EXT. STREET. DAY

CHRIS and GORDON are very good friends, they defend each other/ confrontation with the big boys (1)

GORDON and CHRIS meet in the street, both ready to leave. CHRIS takes GORDON to a backyard and shows him his father's gun that he took with him. GORDON shoots at a garbage can, not knowing that the gun is loaded. GORDON and CHRIS run away. GORDON is angry, he thinks CHRIS knew that the gun was loaded. CHRIS swears that he didn't know. ACE, the leader of the big boy's gang and CHRIS' brother EYEBALL, come towards GORDON and CHRIS. ACE takes away GORDON'S Yankee cap, CHRIS insults ACE, but ACE forces him to take the insult back.

Relationship/Theme:

GORDON/CHRIS: CHRIS swears with a special swear to GORDON that he didn't know that the gun was loaded. GORDON believes him: they trust each other. A moment later CHRIS defends GORDON against ACE. At the second confrontation with the big boys -when they find the body- it is exactly the other way round: GORDON defends CHRIS against ACE.

The way GORDON and CHRIS solve their argument about the gun and the way they defend each other in the two confrontations with the big boys is used to describe **GORDON'S and CHRIS' friendship**.

Characterisation:

ACE is characterised as **unfair** (he takes away something from a smaller boy) and as able to be **violent** (he threatens CHRIS with a burning cigarette).

Object:

The **gun**: someone who holds a gun has got power over someone without a gun. A gun is designed to kill someone and is either used to threaten someone to kill him/her or really to kill him/her. CHRIS indirectly says that his father shoots with it at beer cans when he is drunk. This characterises CHRIS' father and CHRIS' background. Together with the fact that CHRIS took the gun and that it was easy for him to take it this confirms what people think about CHRIS: he is expected to turn out bad.

The boys use the gun later to keep a night guard in the woods and at the end GORDON defends CHRIS with the help of the gun.

(see also page 12: under Objects/Characterisations:)

Structure:

The first shot fired with the gun is almost immediately followed by CHRIS' and GORDON'S confrontation with the big boys (1). The second shot fired with the gun (which is a shot that is under control), is connected with the confrontation with the big boys (2) (which is a situation that GORDON and CHRIS get under control with the help of the gun). At the first confrontation (which is connected with an uncontrolled shot), CHRIS and GORDON lose, at the second one they win.

Music: again an instrumental version of the song "Stand by me" is used when GORDON walks alone on the street and when he and CHRIS walk together on the sidewalk after the confrontation with the big boys.

6. EXT. TRACKS OVER A BRIDGE. DAY

the boys decide to walk on the railways

GORDON, CHRIS, VERN and TEDDY come to the railways. They decide to follow the tracks since they lead to the place where they want to go.

Objects/Characterisations:

The **comb**: VERN brought a comb in case they would be on T.V. Like the pennies he lost, VERN loses his comb later on, he really is a "loser".

VERN, who is **anxious**, brought a **comb** on the journey.

A comb wouldn't be considered to be a thing that is necessary to bring on a journey like that. It characterises VERN'S unrealistic estimation of what the journey would be like, characterises his unusual way of thinking.

VERN says he brought the comb so they would look good on T.V.: he plans ahead for the way he would appear to other people. Like the trousers he wears, which aren't just blue jeans like GORDON'S and CHRIS' trousers or trousers looking like a part of a uniform like TEDDY'S, VERN is concerned in a particular way about how he looks: VERN is anxious and he brings a comb on the journey. It is the object which makes him feel safe. It stands for "looking all right in front of other people", which is something external that he can have under control, compared to his uncontrolled internal anxiety.

GORDON, who has to **realise his brother's death**, wanted to bring his **Yankee cap** on the journey.

ACE took away the Yankee cap which GORDON identifies with his brother.

CHRIS, who is **expected to turn out bad**, brought his father's **gun** on the journey.

A gun would be considered to be an unusual thing for a boy to bring on a journey like that. It not just characterises CHRIS' background and explains why he is expected to turn out bad, but at the same time shows CHRIS being very concerned for their safety, believing that without a gun it would be too dangerous. (This isn't a contradiction but reflects the contradiction of a gun: on the one hand it brings safety, on the other hand an accident could happen or someone else could be provoked to arm himself with an even stronger gun... .)

TEDDY: the other boys wear the same clothes as they had on in the tree house. TEDDY now wears a different T-shirt (and has a dog-tag around his neck). It is the object which is important to him and which he chose to bring on the journey: his uniform-like clothes. TEDDY idealises his father to be a war hero ("My father stormed the beach in Normandy!") and he wants to become a soldier like his father.

TEDDY, who has been **abused by his father**, brings **uniform-like clothes** on the journey.

Relationships/Characterisation:

TEDDY/VERN: TEDDY beats VERN twice on the shoulder for "flinching" which he repeats later on. Once VERN tries to do the same to TEDDY but he fails. This again characterises VERN as the kid the others make jokes about and even can beat a little. TEDDY enjoys to be superior to VERN and to dominate him:

TEDDY (to VERN): Did your mother ever have any kids that lived?

VERN: What do you mean?

TEDDY: Jesus!

Location:

The **railways**: VERN suggests to hitchhike instead of walking along the tracks. TEDDY answers "No way, that sucks!"

Stephen King writes in the novella "The Body", on which "Stand By Me" is based:

'There's a high ritual to all fundamental events, the rites of passage, the magic corridor where the change happens. (...) It (walking down the railroad tracks) seemed right to do it this way, because the rite of passage *is* a magic corridor and so we always provide an aisle-it's what you walk down when you get married, what they carry you down when you get buried. Our corridor was those twin rails, and we walked between them, just hopping along toward whatever this was supposed to mean. You don't hitchhike your way to a thing like that, maybe.'

(Stephen King, "Different Seasons", p. 399)

(remark: None of the boys in the book actually suggests to hitchhike.)

I said earlier that "Stand By Me" has got strong elements from a **road movie**, I think that this description fits that idea very well.

7. EXT. LANDSCAPE/TRACKS. DAY

the boys realise that they didn't bring any food / TEDDY'S problem: he doesn't know whether he should admire or hate his father (1) / confrontation with the train (1)

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN, singing, walk between the railways. They realise that no one brought food and sit down to count their money. A train approaches and all except TEDDY leave the tracks. TEDDY turns towards the train and plays "train dodging". CHRIS pulls TEDDY off the tracks and they have an argument.

Object:

The **train**: in this scene the train endangers TEDDY'S life. While walking over the bridge later on, it nearly kills GORDON and VERN. The train killed RAY BROWER. If the railways as described are a "magic corridor", then the train, which rolls over the railways, stands for some power which has **control over life and death**.

The train here is also used in the following way: CHRIS and TEDDY start to have an argument at the moment where the train starts to pass by. The argument is finished, when the train has passed by. There is a shot where the argument is shown with the train passing by in front: While the **intensity of the argument decreases** in that shot, the **height of the single train wagons decreases** as well.

Characterisations:

TEDDY plays train dodging. In his game the train is an enemy in war ("Just like the beach in Normandy!"). If the train equals a force that has control over life and death, then TEDDY is fighting a hopeless fight against an **over dimensionally stronger adversary**.

CHRIS takes the initiative to pull TEDDY off the tracks. He takes responsibility and reacts on what is happening around him. **CHRIS cares about his friends and the people around him.**

8. EXT. STREET/OPEN CAR. DAY

CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (2)/the big boys are dangerous

ACE and his gang driving in an open car play mailbox-baseball. CHARLIE wants to tell ACE about the body, BILLY stops him.

Characterisations:

ACE is characterised as the **leader** of the big boys gang, he is the one who is being driven in the front seat, the best place for playing mailbox-baseball. He is also the one CHARLIE wants to tell the "secret" about the body. ACE has **control** over his gang: he tells CHARLIE and BILLY to be quiet.

The **big boys** play mailbox-baseball: for them it is a game, for the people in their town it means **destruction** of their property. (The first mailbox that is destroyed has "Home Sweet Home" written on it.) The big boys do what they feel like doing, they even drink while driving in the car.

Music: the **song** used underlines in a cynical way that the big boys are having fun. Its first words "You shake my nerves and you rattle my brain" are clearly audible just after the first mailbox with "Home Sweet Home" written on it is destroyed.

Structure:

After the confrontation with the train (1) another element that brings tension and which has been previously set up becomes important: **Will CHARLIE and BILLY tell the others about the body?** If yes, will the big boys go to find the body as well? And who would reach the place where the body is lying first?

9. EXT. JUNKYARD. DAY

the boys rest (1)/the boys take a risk (1)

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN stand outside the fence of a junkyard. They climb over the fence, even though there is a sign on which is written "No trespassing/Keep out". They drink water from a fountain and toss their coins in order to see who has to go to buy some food: GORDON has to go.

Relationships:

When CHRIS and TEDDY have the argument after CHRIS pulls TEDDY off the tracks, GORDON holds back CHRIS and VERN holds back TEDDY.

What previously started develops even more now: **GORDON/CHRIS** and **TEDDY/VERN** form pairs. TEDDY goes on with enjoying to dominate VERN, while GORDON and CHRIS talk about personal things: in this scene CHRIS tells GORDON one of his dreams in which he fails to save TEDDY.

Relationship/Theme:

GORDON/CHRIS: **GORDON'S and CHRIS friendship:** even when they are competing like when they try to see who runs faster, they do it in a friendly way. It doesn't really matter who wins, just doing something together is important for them.

Theme:

The sign on the fence of the junkyard has written on it: "No trespassing/Keep out". The boys ignore the sign and climb over the fence: since they know (or think to know) about the dog CHOPPER, they **take a risk**.

Location/Themes:

In the **junkyard**, like in the tree house, the boys are on their own (this time even in a forbidden place). VERN says that "this is really a good time." Here and now they can be the way they want, **do what they want to do**. **Insulting one another** is again part of that freedom.

Structure:

GORDON leaves the group to buy some food. In another scene he sits next to the railways and encounters a deer while his friends are still asleep. GORDON is the only one of the boys whose preparations for the journey are shown. He is also the one of the four boys who is introduced first, again on his own, buying a magazine. **GORDON has scenes on his own without his friends.** In the case of "who goes to buy the food" even destiny makes that decision. GORDON is the narrator of the story, at the end he turns out to be a writer: writing also means to do something by oneself, again he is on his own.

Music: there are **two songs** used while the boys are sitting together. They underline that "This is really a good time".

10. EXT. SHOP. DAY
INT. SHOP. DAY
INT. GORDON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM. DAY-DAYDREAM 2-
INT. SHOP. DAY

GORDON buys food in a shop. The SHOPKEEPER talks to him about DENNIS whom he knew. GORDON daydreams/remembers sitting with his family including DENNIS at the table: DENNIS mentions that GORDON wrote a new story. His MOTHER shows some interest, his FATHER only shows interest in DENNIS' next football game. DENNIS says to GORDON that he liked his story. GORDON wakes up from his daydream and pays for the food.

GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (and mother)
(2)/GORDON daydreams(2)

Characterisations:

Again **GORDON** **daydreams**: he can't stop thinking about his dead brother.

Instead of GORDON in V.O. saying "I remember...", the **SHOPKEEPER** says "I remember...", then there is the cut to GORDON'S shot. Like at the beginning when GORDON as a grown up starts to remember the whole story, here as well, there is a move in onto GORDON, followed by a dissolve.

For the beginning of the daydream the same **music** is used as when GORDON enters DENNIS' room.

In addition to the move in, the dissolve and the music, the first shot of the daydream also starts with a move in onto the table where the family is sitting. This visually connects with the move in onto GORDON and through the dissolve it becomes one: his memories now visually are "in his head".

In GORDON'S daydream DENNIS mentions that GORDON wrote a story. This is the first time we hear, that **GORDON writes stories**.

GORDON/DENNIS, GORDON/GORDON'S FATHER and GORDON / GORDON'S MOTHER: GORDON'S FATHER is really not at all interested in GORDON. **GORDON'S MOTHER** shows some interest in GORDON, but she hasn't got much to say: "Are you gonna see Jane after the game? I think she's a lovely girl. / What did you write sweetheart?" are the only three lines she says in the whole film, two of them are even off screen. (She is actually the only woman in the film who gets to say *something*.) **DENNIS** again is nice to GORDON.

Structure:

Here **GORDON has a scene without his friends**. Like in his brother's room, here as well being by himself, he starts to daydream about his brother. (The **SHOPKEEPER** isn't really in the room with GORDON, since he himself is thinking about his past.) When his two daydreams are brought to a kind of resolution in his dream (nightmare), again GORDON is on his own, because when one is asleep and dreams it doesn't matter whether someone is next to oneself or not, the dream is always stronger and more real.

11. EXT. JUNKYARD. DAY

TEDDY'S problem: he doesn't know whether he should hate or admire his father (2)/GORDON learns about the difference between myth and reality

GORDON comes to the junkyard. He sees his friends climbing back over the fence and MILO PRESSMAN, the keeper of the junkyard, approaching with his dog CHOPPER. GORDON starts to run and manages to climb back over the fence in time. MILO PRESSMAN says that TEDDY'S father is a loony. TEDDY goes crazy and starts crying. The boys leave.

Theme:

While being followed by CHOPPER (!), GORDON hears "Chopper! Sic! Balls!" instead of "Sic `im, boy!". GORDON says in the V.O. "Chopper was my first lesson in the vast difference between myth and reality." For the boys their journey is, as previously mentioned, a "fundamental event". During their journey **they experience things which change them**. For GORDON one experience is that of learning about the "vast difference between myth and reality".

Structure:

TEDDY'S scene:

TEDDY goes crazy when MILO PRESSMAN calls his father a loony. TEDDY admires his father ("My father stormed the beach in Normandy!") even though he nearly burned off his ear. TEDDY, who has been **abused by his father**, cries because MILO PRESSMAN says that his father is a loony.

When later GORDON tells a story to his friends, TEDDY suggests to add to the ending that the boy in the story goes home, shoots his father and joins the Texas Rangers. TEDDY admires his father but at the same time he would like to shoot him.

12. EXT. WAY IN THE WOODS. DAY

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN walk next to each other. TEDDY is still upset about what MILO PRESSMAN said. His friends try to comfort him.

TEDDY'S problem: he doesn't know whether he should hate or admire his father (3) / the boys realise that their journey is something serious

Theme:

GORDON says in the V.O. "I wondered how Teddy could care so much for his dad who practically killed him and I couldn't give a shit about my **own dad** who hadn't laid a hand on me since I was three... ." TEDDY'S problem with his father is used to make GORDON **reflect about his own FATHER**.

GORDON'S comment also helps to accept what seems like a contradiction: TEDDY admires his father who abused him. Since GORDON in his V.O. doesn't know an answer we are told that it is OK. if we don't really understand it either.

"But going to see a dead kid, maybe it shouldn't be a party", says GORDON. The boys realise that **their journey is something serious**, that it is something important.

GORDON says in the V.O. "It was **too hot** and too much had happened."

Would the story GORDON tells make sense if it took place in winter? I think it would have to be a completely different story. The **heat** (visually and in words as here in the V.O.) -in a following scene we hear that this is the **last summer** before Junior High School- are used to describe what is going on inside the characters. The heat makes everything *more* difficult, *more* important and *more* real.

13. EXT. OUTSIDE THE TOWN. DAY

The big boys sit together outside the town listening to the radio, tattooing each other and talking about how to get girls into bed. CHARLIE tries to mention the body, BILLY stops him again.

CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (3)

Structure:

Again the element “**Will CHARLIE and BILLY tell the others about the body ?**” is brought in. Through cutting back again to what the big boys are doing, it is suggested that something like that will happen. (In that context also the simple fact that there was one confrontation between the young and the big boys makes expect another confrontation.)

Characterisation:

ACE is characterised as **dangerous**: he says to his friends “If either of you assholes had two thousand dollars, I’d kill you both”.

Objects:

The radio:

There is a news break with “an update on the search for the missing twelve year old Ray Brower”. The radio is used to give BILLY the possibility to try again to mention what he knows about RAY BROWER.

The **first song** used coming from the radio underlines the big boys’ conversation.

Then the radio makes a **sound connection**: it connects this scene through music with the next one. When ACE says “...I’d kill you both”, there is the cut to the young boys walking along the tracks. TEDDY and VERN sing the **second song** which is coming from the radio. The sound connection made through the radio suggests, that the big boys are very close to the young boys, that the cutting back from one group to the other is supposed to suggest that they *will* meet at some point.

14. EXT. TRACKS THROUGH FOREST. DAY

the groups TEDDY/VERN and GORDON/CHRIS are very different from each other/this might be the last time that the boys can be together

TEDDY and VERN in front, CHRIS and GORDON behind them walk on the railways. TEDDY and VERN talk about cartoons, CHRIS and GORDON about their future.

Relationships/Characterisations:

TEDDY/VERN and GORDON/CHRIS: the boys now have formed pairs. The two groups are described as being very different from each other: while **CHRIS/GORDON** talk about Junior High School, **TEDDY/VERN** talk about Superman and Mighty Mouse.

TEDDY/VERN are characterised as naive and child-like and **GORDON/CHRIS** as serious and more grown-up.

The differences between the two groups are shown by what they talk about and underlined by the **music**: when there is the cut to TEDDY/VERN the **song** "Lollipop" which made the sound connection with the previous scene comes in again. It fades out when the camera comes back to GORDON/CHRIS. (The explanation given is that VERN is carrying a little radio in his hand.)

Characterisation:

From GORDON'S and CHRIS' conversation it becomes clear that GORDON is very good at school, his friends aren't. Like at the beginning this again characterises GORDON as the smart kid. In that context, CHRIS mentions that **GORDON writes stories**.

CHRIS also knows about GORDON'S problem with his father, he knows that GORDON'S FATHER just cared about DENNIS. CHRIS says he wishes he was GORDON'S dad, so that GORDON would have someone who takes care of him. CHRIS again is characterised as the one who **cares about his friends and the people around him**.

Music: a **song** makes a **connection** between this scene and the next one. A shot in-between the two scenes combined with the song gives the idea that the boys have been going for some time before reaching the bridge.

Themes:

After having previously discovered that **their journey is something serious**, CHRIS and GORDON talk about their future, their future in life and their future as friends. After the summer holidays the boys will change from Grammar School to Junior High School. For them and especially for GORDON it means that this might be the **last time they can be together**.

15. EXT. TRACKS MAKE A BEND. DAY EXT. BRIDGE OVER RIVER. DAY

VERN'S problem: he is anxious/confrontation with the train (2)/the boys take a risk (2)

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN come to a huge bridge leading over a river. TEDDY convinces his friends to cross the bridge, even though in case that a train comes, they would have to jump. They cross the bridge, a train approaches, GORDON who realises it first, warns his friends and they run. CHRIS and TEDDY reach the other side first, GORDON and VERN just about manage to save themselves in time.

Structure/Characterisation:

At the beginning when TEDDY is introduced GORDON says that he "was the craziest guy we hung around with". In the junkyard GORDON says to CHRIS that TEDDY is "crazy". And like in the confrontation with the train (1), TEDDY is characterised as "crazy" in this scene, the confrontation with the train (2): TEDDY suggests to cross the bridge, even though they don't know when the next train would come. VERN indirectly asks TEDDY what to do if a train comes: "You just jump", says TEDDY. TEDDY doesn't see the consequences of an action he takes. He says "you just jump", without realising what "just jump" would mean. But TEDDY hasn't just suicidal tendencies: when the train comes, he runs as fast as he can. TEDDY is "crazy" because he takes enormous risks, endangers himself with such a persistence, again and again, not seeming to learn from previous experiences.

Again and again TEDDY fights something or someone, no matter whether he has chances to win or not: he fights against the train (the train which killed RAY BROWER and therefore is defined as something which can bring death), he wants to fight against MILO PRESSMAN, who is much stronger than himself. He also insults the big boys at the end, again takes the risk of a fight he would lose. **He fantasises about being a soldier like his father**, he is constantly fighting an **over dimensionally stronger adversary**, and he always hopes to beat those adversaries in a heroic battle in order to become a "war hero" like his father.

Structure/Theme:

Like in the junkyard (the boys take a risk (1)) where they climb over the fence, knowing that it is forbidden and knowing (or thinking to know) about CHOPPER, the boys are willing to do something forbidden and dangerous in that scene (the boys take a risk (2)). During their journey the boys *have to experience things which change them*.

Location/Object:

The **bridge**: there was a small bridge when the boys first came to the railways which was visually preparing for this scene: the boys now have to cross a huge bridge in order to get to the place where the body is lying.

The bridge leads over a precipice. The bridge is high and the bridge is dangerous: the boys could fall from the bridge, the train could come and the boys would have to jump. The bridge is the shortest way to get to the other side (and the boys know about a longer one), and at the same time it is an obstacle on the way.

The bridge is a part of the railways, therefore a part of that "magic corridor". If the boys' journey is a ritual, a "fundamental event" during which they experience things which change them, then the bridge stands for the most dangerous part of that experience: a **train** could come (the power which has control over life and death -the power that killed RAY BROWER-) and bring death.

Theme:

On pages 9/10 I argue that "Stand By Me" has got elements from a horror film. I say that GORDON'S *realisation* (which I believe being a major motif of a horror story/film) isn't personified as a monster, but as a dead kid, which can't do him any harm. In this scene however there is something which comes quite close to a scene in a **horror film**, where someone would be threatened and chased by a terrible monster: while walking over the bridge, GORDON *suddenly realises* that a **train** (this terrible **monster**) is coming, the train which can kill, the train which brings the realisation of *being mortal*. In the next scene, when the boys discuss the train-incident, TEDDY even says to VERN: "Vern, you were so scared you looked like that fat guy out of Abbot and Costello when he saw the **Mummy**."

Like in the scene where GORDON is **being followed** by CHOPPER, a **slow-motion** of GORDON is used: in both cases the slow-motion gives the idea that GORDON is thinking in a very intense way, in a stressful situation, about what is going on. On the bridge the moment of the slow-motion occurs when GORDON is about to "wake up" from his thoughts, in the junkyard it underlines his fantasies about what CHOPPER would do to him.

Structure:

VERN'S scene:

While the others walk over the bridge, VERN crawls, because he is afraid. The comb falls out of his pocket and down the bridge. VERN loses his comb, the object which he brought on the journey, the object which makes him feel safe. After loosing the comb, VERN has to **lose his anxiety** in order to save his life.

VERN holds on to the railways, GORDON has to tear him away, shout at him and when they reach the end of the bridge, GORDON pushes him on the side. In a way there is a parallel to confrontation with the train (1): like CHRIS probably saved TEDDY, GORDON probably saves VERN, with the difference, that GORDON couldn't just pull VERN off the tracks (he isn't as strong as CHRIS and there is no place where he could tear VERN to). Therefore VERN at the same time has to overcome his anxiety himself in order to save his life.

Object:

The **comb** is also used in the following way: there is the shot in which it falls down the bridge, which shows how high the bridge is. The comb is used to set up the danger that the boys (especially VERN) are in. Since VERN is the most endangered the shot is VERN'S P.O.V.

16. EXT. BORDER TO FOREST. DAY
EXT. IN THE FOREST. DAY
EXT. IN THE FOREST. NIGHT
INT. TENT DAY-GORDON'S STORY-
EXT. IN THE FOREST. NIGHT
cutting between INT./EXT. TENT and EXT. IN THE FOREST

the boys rest (2)/GORDON tells a story of revenge/the boys discuss what Goofy is

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN walk through the forest, later they sit around a fire and grill potatoes. They smoke cigarettes and GORDON tells one of his stories to his friends: a fat boy, called LARDASS gets his revenge on a whole town, during a pie eating contest. Being a contestant he throws up the cakes he ate onto a person sitting next to him and provokes a chain reaction of people throwing up onto one another. The boys talk a little and go to sleep. Since they hear unknown noises, they decide to put up a night guard.

Structure:

The confrontation with the train (1) is (after a scene with the big boys in-between) followed by resting (1). The confrontation with the train (2) (after one shot that shows the boys walking in-between) is followed by resting (2). In both cases the confrontation with the train is a climax, which is soon followed by the boys taking a rest and reflecting about what just happened: in the junkyard GORDON and CHRIS talk about TEDDY being "crazy", in this scene the boys talk about how anxious VERN was when he was running in front of the train.

Music: again a **song** makes a **connection** between the shot of the boys walking and the scene where they sit around the fire. Again it gives the idea that the boys are going for some time before they take a rest and it also helps to calm down the pace after the fast scene with the train.

Characterisation:

GORDON'S story:

One of the functions of the story GORDON tells to his friends, is to build-up that GORDON as a grown up is a **writer**.

Themes:

The story that GORDON tells is a story of revenge. A boy gets his revenge on a whole town in a way which is extremely satisfying for him: he makes the people from his town throw up onto one another during a pie eating contest.

Why does GORDON tell a story of revenge?

The main character of the story is as an invented relative of one of the big boys. One of the contestants is the radio announcer who talks on the radio used in the rest of the film: the town GORDON indirectly talks about is the boys' town **Castle Rock**: the name of the boys' hometown gives the idea of a place which is closed to the exterior world, like a *castle*, and there is no way that someone could get in or out of these walls made of *rock*. GORDON says in the V.O. at the end: "Chris did get out." CHRIS was only expected to turn out bad, but he didn't.

The boys like GORDON'S story (his fantasies of revenge):

CHRIS understands the story, he likes it because he knows about **unfairness in a small town** (soon after GORDON'S story, there is CHRIS' scene, which is about his problem with prejudices about him).

TEDDY would like to add another ending: the boy in the story should kill his father and join the Texas Rangers. **TEDDY** likes the story because the story's hero is getting revenge on a whole town by fighting and winning against an **over dimensionally stronger adversary**.

VERN likes the story because he is like the boy in the story: the **fat kid** the others make their jokes about.

GORDON characterises LARDASS as an outsider. No one likes him. In a previous scene GORDON says in the V.O. about himself "That summer at home I had become the invisible boy". Like David Hogan is even called LARDASS by his little brother and sister, GORDON at home is the "invisible boy".

GORDON, the smart kid, tells a story in which he talks about the problems he and his friends have, as well as about the problem of living in a small town like Castle Rock.

Characterisation:

Before going to sleep the boys have the "kind of talk that seemed important until you discover girls" (V.O. GORDON). There is one central question in the boys conversation: "Micky is a mouse, Donald is a duck, Pluto is a dog. What's Goofy?" (GORDON). Like TEDDY and VERN were discussing Mighty Mouse and Superman before, now the boys together discuss Goofy. The discussion about Goofy characterises the **boys** as still quite **young** and child-like, on the contrary to what they experience during their journey.

A personal note: I remember discussing with friends of mine, boys and girls, *exactly* the same "problem" at a point when we were actually younger than the boys in the film. I remember it being very important to *find out* what Goofy really was. And recently I was listening from next door to a children's quiz that my younger sister was watching on T.V.: one question that the kids were asked was "What is Goofy?". This question about Goofy was asked in the same serious way as any other question about history, geography etc. was asked in that quiz.

Music: the **same song** that was just used is used again. This time it comes from the **radio** that CHRIS turns on. The song gives the idea that some time goes by during the boys' conversation and it also helps to create a calm mood.

17. EXT. IN THE FOREST. NIGHT

EXT. WIDE MEADOW/GRAVEYARD. DAY- GORDON'S DREAM-
EXT. IN THE FOREST. NIGHT

GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (3) / CHRIS' problem: he is expected to turn out bad

First VERN, then TEDDY, then CHRIS keep a night guard. GORDON dreams being at DENNIS' funeral and his FATHER turning towards him saying: "It should have been you, GORDON!" GORDON wakes up. He and CHRIS sit down next to each other and CHRIS tells GORDON about the milk money he stole, gave back, but was punished since his teacher kept the money for herself. CHRIS cries.

Characterisations:

The boys put up a night guard. TEDDY and VERN are characterised according to their problem: **TEDDY** fantasises about being in the army and keeping a night guard and **VERN** is over anxious.

GORDON'S dream is like a resolution to his two daydreams and to his conversation with his FATHER when he looks for the canteen. "Why can't you have friends like Dennis?" which I argued means "Why can't you be like him?" or even "Why can't you be him?", develops through GORDON'S second daydream and through the conversation with CHRIS (CHRIS says "Dennis was the one he (GORDON'S FATHER) cared about.") to "Should have been you Gordon!" (GORDON'S FATHER)

Like in GORDON'S second daydream (and the beginning of his V.O. narration) there is a move in onto GORDON followed by a dissolve. This time there is no music, just the **noise** of the coffin being lowered into the grave. The pictures in the dream have got a bright foggy look which makes the black of the clothes that the people wear look even more black and the scene looks like something that GORDON really *just* dreams: the **unrealistic look** makes clear that this **isn't a memory** (as the two daydreams are) but an "invented" dream/nightmare.

Structure /Theme:

GORDON'S problem isn't entirely discussed in that scene, because the boys haven't reached the body yet. Since it is the story GORDON tells, his problem just only can be resolved at the end. But there is a parallel between that scene and the one when the boys find the body:

Here GORDON consoles CHRIS, at the end it is CHRIS who consoles GORDON. Again this is also a story about **GORDON'S and CHRIS' friendship**. On the contrary to TEDDY and VERN who try to give each other "two for flinching", GORDON and CHRIS cry while being with one another and console each other.

Structure:

CHRIS' scene:

Since it is CHRIS' turn to keep guard he is **forced to hold the gun** -which characterises his background- **while talking about his problem**, which is connected to his background.

CHRIS' problem are the **prejudices in his town** towards him. Coming from a bad family everyone "just knew" (V.O. GORDON) that he would turn out bad.

18. EXT. FOREST. DAY

EXT. TRACKS NEXT TO FOREST. DAY

EXT. TRACKS NEAR WATER TANK. DAY

EXT. TRACKS NEXT TO WATER TANK. DAY

EXT. TRACKS, BEND / FIELD. DAY

GORDON'S secret/the boys decide to leave the railways

GORDON reads in one of his magazines while his friends are asleep. A deer approaches. GORDON and the deer look at each other. The boys walk on the tracks until they reach a bend where they leave the tracks and keep on walking another way.

Structure:

GORDON says about his encounter with the deer in V.O.: "That was the one thing I kept to myself. I have never spoken or written about it until just now."

GORDON has scenes on his own. The scene with the deer is one of them. Those scenes make the film to be more *his story*, than just the story about four friends.

Characterisation:

GORDON'S encounter with the deer:

The fact that GORDON says "I have never spoken or **written** about it..." again builds up to the last scene in which he turns out to be a **writer**.

Theme:

GORDON'S encounter with the deer is a special moment for him. He doesn't explain why he didn't tell his friends about the deer, and also the deer isn't mentioned again. GORDON never told anyone about the deer, but he *writes it down* the moment he says it in V.O. In that context it is interesting what Stephen King writes in "The Body" right at the beginning:

'The most important things are the hardest things to say. They are the things you get ashamed of, because words diminish them-words shrink things that seemed limitless when they were in your head to no more than living size when they're brought out. (...) That's the worst, I think. When the secret stays locked within not for want of a teller but for want of an understanding ear.'

(Stephen King, "Different Seasons", p. 289)

An article about "Stand By Me" in the Metro Magazine (see Bibliography page 40) interprets the deer that is forced to flee as a symbol for fleeting innocence. I think that this interpretation is too simple. Any *shy* animal would have to *flee* from a human. The fact that the deer flees is important -it characterises the **shy animal**-but it isn't the most important aspect in that scene.

Would the scene make sense if GORDON encountered a wild pig? Or a tortoise? I don't think it would. The scene makes sense because GORDON encounters a **deer** (a **shy** animal). I also think that the scene could end before the deer flees, showing just GORDON and the deer looking at each other. (I don't think that the scene would be better than the way it is, but I think it is a possibility which shows that the fact that the deer flees isn't the most important part in that scene.)

Would the scene make sense if GORDON encountered two deer? Or four? Again I think that this would be a complete different scene.

The scene makes sense with one deer, because the **one deer** is *like* GORDON:

1) Both the deer and GORDON are **on their own**, without those they are with usually.

2) The **melancholic dimension** (moody, reserved, quiet ...) that can be used to describe GORDON also can be used to describe a deer. (With other words if this scene was about TEDDY'S encounter with an animal, TEDDY might encounter the wild pig which could be described through the choleric dimension (touchy, aggressive, changeable ...)).

3) Both GORDON and the deer are **young**. Again the scene would be very different if GORDON encountered an old deer with a huge pair of antlers.

Therefore: a) **GORDON encounters a deer that is *like* him.**

The deer at first doesn't see GORDON. When it notices him it doesn't immediately flee. It doesn't see GORDON as a danger. Only after a moment the deer leaves.

The expression "timid as a fawn" describes what humans associate with a deer: even though the deer is said to be timid it doesn't flee.

Therefore: b) **The timid deer doesn't see GORDON as a danger.**

The fact that GORDON encounters a **deer that is *like* him** and that the **timid deer doesn't see him as a danger** -combined with the fact that GORDON in the V.O. doesn't really explain the situation- **makes us, the audience, interpret the moment as special**: we believe that a moment like that could happen, even though we can't explain it.

GORDON says in the V.O. "That was the one thing I kept to myself. I have never spoken or written about it **until just now**." Since we know that the voice saying this line is GORDON'S voice as a grown-up we know that he never told *any* of his friends about the deer. That again makes the scene and the moment of the narration -the **present time**- special: we are put in the role of a **witness**.

The boys **leave the tracks** and take another way. Leaving the tracks gives the idea that their journey is about to come to an end and that from now on they have to **find their way on their own**.

Structure:

Music: again a **song connects** shots of the boys walking and gives the idea of time going by.

19. INT. BAR. DAY
EXT. BRIDGE IN TOWN. DAY
EXT. HOUSE. DAY

CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (4)

CHARLIE and BILLY finally tell their secret to ACE and EYEBALL who tell it to the other boys in the gang. The big boys get themselves ready to leave.

Theme:

ACE and EYEBALL break their “swear on their mother’s good name” and tell the other boys in the gang about RAY BROWER. Just before the first confrontation with the big boys CHRIS swears on his “mother’s name” that he didn’t know that the gun was loaded.

“Mother” is a sort of taboo that the young boys enjoy breaking by “degrading a friend’s mother” but which CHRIS isn’t allowed to break when he says to ACE at the second confrontation “Why don’t you go home and fuck your mother some more”.

“Mother” is holy -but just good as a pretext for a swear or for getting in rage-. The young boys use “mother” to make jokes, the big boys break their “mother”-swears.

Structure:

“Will CHARLIE and BILLY tell the others about the body?” is now resolved. After the young boys leave the railways (which in a way were safe), the big boys go on their way. Leaving the safe railways therefore is also used as the point where the young boys finally get competition.

Music: a **song connects** the whole sequence. It is used to give the idea of time going by.

20. EXT. NEAR SMALL LAKE IN FOREST. DAY
EXT. SMALL LAKE IN FOREST/PLACE NEXT TO IT. DAY

the boys fall in a lake full of leeches/the boys have a discussion about going back

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN have to walk through a small lake which turns out to be deeper than they thought. They play around in the water until they realise that the lake is full of leeches. They take their clothes off and get rid of the leeches. GORDON has to take one last leech out of his underpants and then faints. There is a discussion about whether they should go back or not.

Theme/Structure:

During their journey the boys **experience things which change them**. Both the bridge that they cross and the lake they fall into turn out to be more dangerous than they thought. And like the bridge the lake turns out to be like a trap **for all of them**. The train at the bridge nearly kills them and the **leeches** in the lake want to *suck the blood out of their bodies*. Like the scene at the bridge focuses on VERN, this scene focuses on GORDON: he doesn't really want to play around in the water, but his friends make him to. He then discovers the leeches (he also was the one who first saw the train on the bridge) and then has got a leech in his underpants. When CHOPPER follows GORDON, he *hears* "Chopper! Sic! Balls!" This time a leech *does* what CHOPPER didn't do. After the encounter with the deer GORDON has a terrifying experience which makes him faint.

On the contrary to the scene on the bridge and the one in the junkyard, the boys in that scene don't take a risk. They twice **misjudge a situation**: first they fall into the lake that is deeper than they thought and then they realise too late that there are leeches in the lake.

Like when TEDDY cries after MILO PRESSMAN called his father a loony, GORDON fainting makes the boys think about going back. Again the boys are made aware that **their journey is something serious**.

21. EXT. ROAD/INT. TWO CARS. DAY

the big boys are on their way / ACE is likely to kill someone

The big boys drive in two cars towards the place where the body is lying. They have a race, which ACE, who is driving one of the cars, wins while nearly causing an accident with an approaching lorry.

Characterisation/Structure:

Just before ACE is insulted by CHRIS and approaches him with a knife, ACE is characterised as someone who **is likely to kill someone**.

Music: again a **song** is used while the big boys drive in the car. Like when they were playing mailbox-baseball it is a fast song which underlines the action taking place.

22. EXT. BORDER OF FOREST. DAY EXT. NEXT TO LAKE IN FOREST. DAY

GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (4)/ confrontation with the big boys (2)

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN find the body. GORDON cries, being reminded of DENNIS. The big boys arrive. There is an argument about who can take the body. ACE attacks CHRIS and GORDON defends CHRIS with the gun. The big boys leave.

Characterisation:

When the boys approach the body the **music** used is a much more elaborated version of the theme when GORDON enters DENNIS' room. (This theme is also used in GORDON'S second daydream.) That way the connection between DENNIS and RAY BROWER is also shown in the soundtrack.

Structure:

GORDON'S scene:

Seeing RAY BROWER'S body GORDON says "It should have been me", which relates to DENNIS and the dream about his funeral. After that dream GORDON told CHRIS that he didn't cry at DENNIS funeral: seeing RAY BROWER'S body GORDON finally **cries over his dead brother**, as well as about **the difficult relationship with his FATHER**.

GORDON points the gun at ACE. He defends CHRIS, just as CHRIS defends him in the confrontation with the big boys (1). (After CHRIS saved TEDDY'S life and GORDON saved VERN'S life, GORDON now saves CHRIS' life.)

Furthermore GORDON is motivated to point the gun at ACE since he took away his Yankee cap.

Music: when ACE approaches CHRIS with the knife there is a **simple sound** which slowly increases in volume and stops when there is the gunshot. That sound builds up tension which is resolved through the gunshot -the moment CHRIS isn't in danger any more.

Themes:

The **body**: the boys made the journey in order to find the body and to become heroes.

Would the story make sense if it was the body of an old man? I don't think it would. The boys made the journey in order to find and see the body of a kid their age, the body of someone who *died young*. The boys make a journey and **experience things which change them**. Their journey might be the **last time they can be together**. At the end of their journey there is the body of a dead kid their age. RAY BROWER is an **image** for what the boy's journey is about: it is **the end of childhood**.

23. EXT. FIELD. DAY

EXT. LANDSCAPE. NIGHT

EXT. BRIDGE IN TOWN. DAY

EXT. NEAR VERN'S HOUSE/TEDDY'S HOUSE. DAY

EXT. STREET. DAY

EXT. NEAR TREE HOUSE. DAY

the boys walk home/GORDON and CHRIS say good-bye to each other

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN walk home. They reach their town the next morning and TEDDY and VERN leave. CHRIS and GORDON walk to the tree house. CHRIS leaves and dissolves out of the picture while GORDON narrates that CHRIS recently got killed.

Themes/Structure:

GORDON says in the V.O. "...somehow the town seemed different, smaller", when they come back home to Castle Rock. This summarises that **during their journey the boys experienced things which changed them.**

GORDON says in the V.O. "As time went on we saw less and less from Teddy and Vern. Eventually they became just two more faces in the halls". This relates to what GORDON and CHRIS talked about: the journey was their **last time they could be together.**

GORDON and CHRIS do their secret handshake and CHRIS leaves. They both raise their hand to say good-bye. Just after that CHRIS dissolves out of the picture while GORDON narrates in V.O. that CHRIS recently got killed. The images of the boys **saying good-bye on one occasion** (which marks the end of their childhood) are used to tell from a **farewell in a much stronger sense** (CHRIS' death, his end of life).

Music: an instrumental version of the **song** "Stand by me" is used to **connect** the shots of the boys walking home as well as it connects the shots of GORDON and CHRIS walking to the tree house. It is used to give the idea of time going by. The instrumental version of "Stand by me" used here has got bass in it which the one used at the beginning of the film didn't have: it more resembles now the song "Stand by me" which is played at the end of the film.

24. INT. GORDON'S HOUSE AS A GROWN-UP. DAY

INT. GORDON'S HOUSE AS A GROWN-UP/VIEW TO OUTSIDE
THROUGH WINDOW. DAY

ending of the framing device

The grown-up GORDON finishes typing the story he just told. He leaves with his SON and a FRIEND OF HIS SON.

Characterisation/Structure:

What has been build up throughout the whole film is finally resolved: GORDON has become a **writer**.

Themes/Structure:

Like at the beginning there is the **motif of two boys**. Here they are GORDON'S SON and a FRIEND OF HIS SON. Thinking about them GORDON types the last two lines of the story into his computer: "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?". The story GORDON wrote was also a story about **GORDON'S and CHRIS' friendship**.

While GORDON exits the room the **song** "Stand by me" is played on the soundtrack: in the opening scene an instrumental version of the song is used. The same instrumental version is used twice before the journey when GORDON walks through Castle Rock (once he is alone, once with CHRIS) and in another version -which resembles more the song than the other one- when the boys return back home and when GORDON and CHRIS walk to the tree house. After GORDON finishes remembering, writing down and telling his story, the real song "Stand by me", not just the music, but also its lyrics -its meaning- is played.

CREDITS

II. Conclusion:

A. The main elements of the story's structure (I):

The central element of the story's structure: GORDON is a writer/GORDON'S problem

At the beginning and the end of the film there is a **framing device**. The actual **story is told within that device**. A V.O. is set up in the beginning of the framing device and is used throughout the whole film. GORDON, the narrator, is one of the four main characters of the story. Throughout the film there is a **build up** to the ending of the framing device **about the topic of GORDON being a writer**:

The **grown-up GORDON** is introduced as someone who **tells a story**. His V.O. narration turns into a **story told in pictures** with its sounds, with music and the V.O. coming back at certain places. The **young GORDON** is introduced buying a **magazine** ("True Police Cases") with **stories** in it. There are two **daydreams** that GORDON has: these again are **told in pictures** and suggest that GORDON has got a powerful imagination. The grown-up GORDON in V.O. also **takes over VERN'S narration** about the conversation he was listening to, while being under the porch. GORDON has a **dream** which is **told in pictures** as well. The first time we hear that GORDON **writes stories** is during a daydream when his brother mentions it. After CHRIS mentions it again while walking on the tracks, GORDON later **tells a story** to his friends. That story again is **told in pictures**, the way GORDON imagines it. (This story now is a story told within the story told within the framing device.) After the encounter with the deer GORDON says in the V.O. "I have never spoken or **written** about it until just now". Here the V.O. mentions that **writing** is important to GORDON.

At the end of the film it isn't surprising that GORDON has become a writer, since there has been the build up about that topic.

The **young GORDON has scenes on his own without his friends** (when he is first introduced, the preparation for the journey, when he buys food, his two daydreams and his dream, the encounter with the deer) *because* he is the **narrator of the story**. Through those scenes that he has without his friends the film becomes more **GORDON'S story** than just the story about four friends.

GORDON'S problem is discussed throughout the whole film and just resolved at the end of the boys journey. That way it becomes the **central element** of the story's structure. It also underlines that this is more **GORDON'S story**.

A. The main elements of the story's structure (II):

GORDON, CHRIS, TEDDY and VERN: their scenes, problems and objects

There are **four scenes**, one for each of the boys, which are about their **problems**:

GORDON, who has to **realise his brother's death**, cries when the boys find the body.

CHRIS, who is **expected to turn out bad**, cries after he tells **GORDON** that he gave the milk money he stole back, but was punished because his teacher kept the money for herself.

TEDDY, who has been **abused by his father**, first goes crazy and then cries when **MILO PRESSMAN** says that his father is a loony.

VERN, who is **anxious**, has to lose his anxiety on the bridge in order to save his life.

Corresponding to these four scenes, there are **four objects**, one for each of the boys, which are related to their problems and which they bring (or try to bring) on the journey:

GORDON wants to bring the **Yankee cap** which **DENNIS** gave him. **ACE** takes it away. **GORDON** identifies the Yankee cap with his brother. Since **GORDON** has to **realise his brother's death**, the Yankee cap is related to his problem.

CHRIS brings his father's **gun**. Everyone -including himself- *just knew* that he would **turn out bad**. The gun characterises **CHRIS' background** and therefore is related to his problem.

TEDDY brings his **uniform-like clothes**. **TEDDY**, who has been **abused by his father**, doesn't know whether he should admire or hate his **father**. **TEDDY'S** uniform-like clothes are related to his problem, since he identifies them with what he believes his father to be, a war hero.

VERN brings his **comb**. **VERN** is **anxious**. The comb that stands for "looking all right in front of other people", which is something external that he can have under control, compared to his uncontrolled internal anxiety. That way the comb is related to his problem.

The four **objects** are used to **characterise** the boys and have a direct or indirect **function in the four scenes** where the boys' problems are discussed:

ACE takes away the **Yankee cap**. That way **GORDON** can't bring his object on the journey: like he lost his brother, he loses the Yankee cap. Just after he cries over his dead brother, GORDON points the gun at ACE: GORDON doesn't let ACE take away the body (which reminds GORDON of DENNIS) the way ACE took away the Yankee cap (which GORDON identifies with DENNIS). That way the Yankee cap is indirectly related to GORDON'S scene.

CHRIS cries after telling GORDON about the milk money. Since it is his turn to keep the night guard he *has to* hold the **gun**, which characterises his background and stands for his problem, the prejudices about him. That way the gun is directly related to CHRIS' scene.

TEDDY'S object, his **uniform-like clothes**, are in an extreme way *very close* to him: like CHRIS *has to* hold the gun in his scene, TEDDY *has to* wear his clothes during the whole journey. That way TEDDY'S uniform-like clothes are directly related to his scene.

VERN loses the **comb** just before he has to overcome his anxiety in order to save his life. The comb stands for "looking all right in front of other people". VERN brings it on the journey in order to feel secure. Since he loses the comb just before he feels extremely insecure, the comb is directly related to his scene.

A. The main elements of the story's structure (III):

ACE, EYEBALL, CHARLIE, BILLY and the other big boys: their characterisation and functions

From the beginning on, when VERN tells his friends what he heard while being under the porch, there is the element that not just the young boys, but also the big boys know about RAY BROWER. This element develops to "**Will CHARLIE and BILLY tell the others about the body ?**". Through cutting back again and again to the big boys it is suggested that something *will* happen and that the big boys will be involved. Since there has been the first confrontation between the young boys and the big boys, a second confrontation is expected and inevitable.

The characterisation of ACE develops from being **unfair** (he takes away the Yankee cap from GORDON who is younger and weaker) and able to be **violent** (he threatens CHRIS with a burning cigarette) to someone who **destroys** other people's things (the mailboxes), while he **leads and controls** his gang (he makes them shut-up), who is **dangerous** ("If either of you assholes had two thousand dollars, I'd kill you both") and someone who is **likely to kill someone** (the car race).

CHRIS says to ACE: "Why don't you go home and fuck your mother some more". Since the **(un)importance of "mother"** has been explained and discussed throughout the film, ACE has been characterised the way as just described and since there has already been one confrontation between ACE and CHRIS, the moment where ACE approaches CHRIS with the knife and says: "You're dead" becomes a climax just like the scene on the bridge when the boys run in front of the train. (Like ACE previously was defined as someone who is likely to kill, the train as well was defined as something that can kill -through RAY BROWER- before the boys are confronted with it.)

The **first confrontation with the big boys** leads up to the **second one**, in the first one CHRIS defends GORDON, in the second one GORDON defends CHRIS. A first and uncontrolled pistol shot is immediately followed by the first and uncontrolled confrontation with the big boys, a second and controlled pistol shot is directly connected with the second confrontation with the big boys.

CHRIS/GORDON and TEDDY/VERN form pairs, just like ACE/EYEBALL and CHARLIE/BILLY appear as pairs. There are parallels between the characters in the two groups: CHRIS and ACE are the leaders, GORDON and EYEBALL the leader's friend, TEDDY/VERN and CHARLIE/BILLY those who are just with the others.

A. The main elements of the story's structure (IV):

The boys have **two confrontations with the train**, both of which are followed soon after by the boys **taking a rest**. In both cases the encounter with the train is a climax that *has to be* followed by the boys resting. (The second confrontation is *more dangerous* than the first one, therefore the second time that the boys take a rest is also *longer* than the first time.)

The boys **twice take a risk**, once it is combined with the boys **taking a rest** (in the junkyard), once with the **second confrontation with the train** (on the bridge.)

The scene on the bridge therefore is a scene which has **two elements of tension** in it that have been build up: the second and (therefore) more dangerous confrontation with the train and the second and (therefore) more dangerous risk that the boys take. In addition to that it is **VERN'S scene**. It is the **second time** where there is a **slow-motion used on GORDON**: like in the first slow-motion GORDON is endangered and being or about to be followed.

Like in the first confrontation with the train CHRIS probably saves TEDDY'S life, GORDON saves probably VERN'S in the second confrontation with the train.

The scene on the bridge has a number of different elements tied together, just like the second confrontation with the big boys.

The train during the boys' journey and ACE and his gang before and after the journey are the two main elements that are opposed to the boys.

B. Themes: friendship, death and the end of childhood:

During their journey the boys **experience things which change them**: they are either directly **confronted with their personal problems or are forced to reflect about them**. They both have a **very good time** (when they sit together in the junkyard, when GORDON tells his story), and **very frightening moments** (on the bridge when the train comes, at the small lake when they find out that the lake is full of leeches). GORDON has a special moment with the deer, and twice he is confronted with an animal that threatens his genitals: CHOPPER in his fantasy and a leech in reality. **Three times one** of the boys probably **saves another one's life** (CHRIS saves TEDDY'S life, GORDON saves VERN'S life and GORDON saves CHRIS' life).

The boys realise that **their journey is something serious**. It is the **last summer** before Junior High School and at one point that summer even was "**too hot** and too much had happened". The boys walk between the railways, through that "**magic corridor where the change happens**" (Stephen King, see page 13) and at the end of their journey they see what they came for: **a dead kid their age**. RAY BROWER is an image for what their journey stands for: **the end of childhood**.

Death is both **visually and as regards contents** connected with the **end of childhood** (through RAY BROWER) as well as it is connected with the **end of GORDON'S and CHRIS' friendship**: after CHRIS and GORDON say good-bye to each other CHRIS dissolves out of the picture. Since **CHRIS visually disappears as a boy and not as a man**, again **death and the end of childhood are connected**.

Death is also a central theme that goes through the structure of the film. When CHRIS dissolves out of the picture **the circle of three deaths, three bodies is closed**: **CHRIS' death** stood at the beginning and was **GORDON'S motivation to tell the story**, **DENNIS' death** was **GORDON'S (subconscious) motivation to go to find the body** and **RAY BROWER'S death** was **GORDON'S trigger mechanism to cry about his brother's death as well as about his difficult relationship with his FATHER**.

C. Again the main points in the story:

The numbers 1) etc. relate to the segment in which those points are discussed in I. Analysis in 24 Segments (page 3 to 31).

- 1)
beginning of the framing device
introduction of the main themes
- 2)
introduction of one of the main characters (GORDON),
the time (the 50's)
and the main character's hometown (Castle Rock)
- 3)
introduction of the other main characters (CHRIS, TEDDY, VERN)
the boys are going to go to find the dead body of a kid their age
CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (1)
- 4)
GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (1)
GORDON daydreams (1)
- 5)
CHRIS and GORDON are very good friends, they defend each other
confrontation with the big boys (1)
- 6)
the boys decide to walk on the railways
- 7)
the boys realise that they didn't bring any food
TEDDY'S problem: he doesn't know whether he should admire or hate his father (1)
confrontation with the train(1)
- 8)
CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (2)
the big boys are dangerous
- 9)
the boys rest (1)
the boys take a risk (1)
- 10)
GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (and mother) (2)
GORDON daydreams (2)
- 11)
TEDDY'S problem: he doesn't know whether he should hate or admire his father (2)
GORDON learns about the difference between myth and reality
- 12)
TEDDY'S problem: he doesn't know whether he should admire or hate his father (3)
the boys realise that their journey is something serious

13)
CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (3)

14)
the groups TEDDY/VERN and GORDON/CHRIS are very different from each other
this might be the last time that the boys can be together

15)
VERN'S problem: he is anxious
confrontation with the train (2)
the boys take a risk (2)

16)
the boys rest (2)
GORDON tells a story of revenge
the boys discuss what Goofy is

17)
CHRIS' problem: he is expected to turn out bad
GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (3)

18)
GORDON'S secret
the boys decide to leave the railways

19)
CHARLIE-BILLY and their secret (4)

20)
the boys fall in a lake full of leeches
the boys have a discussion about going back

21)
the big boys are on their way
ACE is likely to kill someone

22)
GORDON'S problem: he lost his brother, the relationship to his father (4)
confrontation with the big boys (2)

23)
the boys walk home
GORDON and CHRIS say good-bye to each other

24)
ending of the framing device

Main Credits

A Columbia Pictures release of an Act III Production/U.S.A., 1986

Director Rob Reiner

Screenplay Raynold Gideon, Bruce A. Evans

Based upon the novella "The Body" by Stephen King

Producer Andrew Scheinman, Bruce A. Evans, Raynold Gideon

Director of Photography Thomas del Ruth

Production Designer Dennis Washington

Film Editor Robert Leighton

Music Jack Nitzsche

Casting Jane Jenkins, Janet Hirshenson

Gordie Lachance.....Wil Wheaton

Chris Chambers.....River Phoenix

Teddy Duchamp.....Corey Feldman

Vern TessioJerry O'Connel

Ace Merrill.....Kiefer Sutherland

The Writer.....Richard Dreyfuss

Technicolor / 1: 1.85 / Dolby Stereo / Running Time: 87 minutes

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